Amateur Computer Group of New Jersey NEWS

Trenton Computer Festival

Jeff Gomez — **Aram Friedman**

Keynote Speaker for the 37th anniversary of TCF is Jeff Gomez, CEO of Starlight Runner Entertainment and the world's leading producer of trans-media entertainment properties. In this exclusive talk, Jeff recounts his personal journey from the inner city to the sound stages of the greatest movies and video games of the past decade. Jeff will recount how his understanding of the fundamentals of storytelling and interactive technology in the 1980s influenced his ability to foresee and develop the techniques of multi-platform narrative being used today in projects as diverse as James Cameron's Avatar and Microsoft's Halo.

We have also obtained Aram Friedman as a featured speaker this year. Aram was Director of Engineering of the Hayden Planetarium from 1998 through 2002. He has been involved with film, video, computer graphics, and special effects industries. During TCF he will be demonstrating a software based planetarium that he's developed. His demonstration will include an eye opening presentation on the birth of the universe. ⌨

ACGNJ Meetings

For the very latest news on ACGNJ meetings, please visit the ACGNJ Website (*www.acgnj.org*).

Main Meeting: Friday, March 2, 8:00 PM
 Evan Williams (president@acgnj.org)
Lunics (Linux/UNIX): Monday, March 5, 8:00 PM
 Andreas Meyer (lunics@acgnj.org)
Investing: Thursday, March 8, 8:00 PM
 Jim Cooper (jim@thecoopers.org).
NJ Gamers: Friday, March 9, **6**:00 PM
 Gregg McCarthy (greggmajestic@gmail.com)
TCF 2012: Saturday, March 10, 9 AM to 5 PM
 For further information, go to *www.tcf-nj.org*
Layman's Forum: Monday, March 12, 8:00 PM
 Matt Skoda (som359@aol.com)
Hardware Workshop: Monday, March 12, 8 PM
 Mike Reagan (hardware@acgnj.org)
Java: Tuesday, March 13, 7:30 PM
 Mike Redlich (mike@redlich.net)
WebDev: Wednesday, March 14, 7:30 PM
 Evan Williams (webdev@acgnj.org)
Window Pains: Friday, March 16, 8:00 PM
 John Raff (john@jraff.com)
Firefox: Monday, March 19, 7:30 PM
 David McRitchie (firefox@acgnj.org)
C/C++: Tuesday, March 20, 7:30 PM
 Bruce Arnold (barnold@ieee.org)

All meetings, unless otherwise noted, are at the Scotch Plains Rescue Squad, 1916 Bartle Ave, Scotch Plains, New Jersey. Directions and map on back cover. ⌨

http://www.acgnj.org

Founded 1975

In This Issue

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Window Pains	John Raff	(973) 992-9002	Vendor Liaison	Arnold Milstein	(908) 753-8036
			Webmaster	John Raff	(973) 992-9002

ACGNJ News

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Tips for reviewers: Why does anyone need it? Why did you like it or hate it? Ease (or difficulty) of installation, learning and use. Would you pay for it?

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ACGNJ Announcements

Main Meeting
Friday, March 2ⁿᵈ, 8:00 PM to 10:00 PM

Bob Hawes will survey currently available free word processors (IBM Lotus Symphony, LibreOffice, etc.), and compare them to MS Word.

Window Pains Meeting
Friday, March 16ᵗʰ, 8:00 PM to 10:00 PM

John Raff and Bob Hawes will demonstrate how to edit and update websites, using such tools as Notepad++, KompoZer, and FileZilla.

Java Users Group Meeting
Tuesday, March 13ᵗʰ, 7:30PM to 9:30 PM

Paul Furbacher will discuss either (a) the Spring Data project (*http://www.springsource.org/spring-data/*) and the JPA, or (b) an update on the Google Web Toolkit (*http://code.google.com/webtoolkit/*). There has been an increase in demand for these skills in the job market.

C, C++ Users Group Meeting
Tuesday, March 20ᵗʰ, 7:30 PM to 10:00 PM

Bruce Arnold will continue discussing "KindleRead", an application for accessing information from your browser, word documents, e-mails, etc. and then e-mailing that data to your Kindle. A wide range of other C++ and programming topics will also be discussed.

Back Us Up, Mister Tux
Bob Hawes, ACGNJ

This is the fourth time that I've based a title on what is arguably the most famous quote from *Star Trek* that **didn't** actually happen. (It's a prime example of misquotation, a fairly common phenomenon in literature and journalism. A real or fictional phrase gets "distilled" through extraneous use until it comes out sounding *very* much better than whatever its

original source really was). I'll be brief: William Shatner (playing Captain James T. Kirk) **never, ever** said "Beam me up, Scotty" in *any Star Trek* TV episode or movie. The closest he came was in *Star Trek: The Animated Series* (where Shatner **did** provide the voice), when he said; "Beam us up, Mr. Scott". Hence, my title. (In case you didn't know,

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Tux the penguin is the official mascot of the Linux kernel). If you *really* want further details, see *Back Me Up, Scotty* (in our November 2010 issue), *Back Us Up, Mister Gates* (April 2011), and/or *Back Me Up, Cloney* (January 2012). In *Back Me Up, Scotty*, I discussed my early backup media (floppy disks, DC2120 tapes, CDs), and my early DOS backup programs, culminating in Colorado Backup for DOS (**still** my favorite). I also mentioned Colorado Backup for Windows 95, its overall *un*satisfactory "upgrade". In *Back Us Up, Mister Gates*, I discussed three current Windows programs; and in *Back Me Up, Cloney*, I discussed the Linux program Clonezilla. (My current "go-to guy", and the drive imaging program that I trust the most).

Just about four and a quarter years ago, in *Further Adventures in Time Travel* (my article in our December 200**7** issue), I wrote; "Next month, we'll look at some contemporary backup programs". Here it is, roughly **fifty-one** "next" months later, and I'm finally fulfilling that promise. Now, if someone were to ask me "What about those programs you just

mentioned above?", I'd reply "Although I rely on Clonezilla quite heavily, I don't consider it to be a *true* backup program. It makes and restores images of **complete** partitions. It *can't* do individual files or directories. As for those 'W-word' programs, the less said about them, the better". In this article, I'm looking at KBackup version 0.7.1, a file-based (rather than image-based) Linux backup program. It's advertised as "An easy to use backup program". According to its website, it features a user friendly, menu driven interface, plus a command line interface for inclusion in automated scripts. It can create full or incremental backups, and includes support for compression, encryption and double buffering. It supports multiple backup profiles, and automated unattended or manual backups. It supports tape drives, floppies and removable media, as well as remote backups across networks; and it's highly reliable, thanks to using long established tools like afio (a program that manipulates archives and files) and tar (a type of archive file). Unfortunately, it **doesn't** seem to have a "compare-after-backup" option.

About a year ago, I made temporary backups of the seven partitions on my 320 GB data hard disk, prior to running Spinrite (my fabulous but proprietary hard disk testing program) to check the condition of those partitions. That's the reason I split that disk into seven approximately equal chunks (measuring around 41 to 43 GB each) in the first place. It takes Spinrite about fourteen hours to thoroughly examine a single FAT32 partition of that size. Thus, if I start Spinrite before supper on one day, it'll be finished by breakfast on the next. That way, I only lose access to my computer for one night. (Seven, actually, but I can spread those nights across several weeks, so it's not that big a problem). Now it's time for those partitions to receive their annual quality checks once again; and I've got to make new temporary backups first. So I might as well use KBackup to do one of them. I'll start by backing up the **first** partition on my data hard disk (oddly, labeled L_DRIVE). It contains 11,201 files in 1,797 directories, occupying 41.6 of its 41.8 GB total capacity. (Of the 82 files in its root directory, 14 are bigger than 1 GB).

I've said it before and I'll say it again: If I hadn't been able to run MD5Summer.exe under Ubuntu (using Wine, the translation layer/program loader for Windows applications), I probably **wouldn't** have been able to make the move to Linux. This MD5 program is that important to me. An MD5 (Message-Digest 5) sum is a 32-digit hexadecimal number. An MD5 file is a text file made up of two columns. The first column contains a list of MD5 sums. The second column contains a list of file names associated with those sums. MD5Summer.exe reads the name of each file, finds its contents on the hard disk, recalculates its MD5 value, and then compares that to the MD5 sum in the first column. If they match, good. If they *don't*, *__BAD!!!__* Now, MD5 itself **has** been "cracked", and is currently considered "cryptographically unsuitable"; but I'm **not** trying to transmit secret messages across enemy territory. I'm just checking my files for accidental corruption.

Most people seem to have forgotten that *__NO__* copy, download, backup or restore operation can **ever** be guaranteed to be perfect. For verifying those

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functions, MD5 sums are still eminently suitable. (There **are** other MD5 tools out there, but MD5Summer.exe is capable of processing (and accurately reporting on) *tens* of *thousands* of files easily. I haven't seen anything else that even comes close). Anyway, before I could perform my new test backup, I had to re-make the MD5 file that I'd previously created for L_DRIVE (because files on it had been added and/or deleted since last year). While it **could** have been possible to identify those files separately and then edit the old MD5 file to update its information, it was quicker and easier just to make a new file. (I named it L_Total.MD5). That took 50 minutes and 52 seconds. **Then** it was time to make my backup.

So I started KBackup. After its "KBackup" window opened, the first thing I did was to pull down its File menu and look for a configuration file. "Profile Settings" looked like a good bet, so I clicked on it. A smaller window, also labeled Profile Settings popped up. At its top, the box labeled "Archive Prefix (empty for default)" was, in fact, empty. Beneath

that, "Maximum Archive Size" was set to "unlimited", then "Number of backups to keep" was set to "unlimited", too, and "Full Backup Interval" was set to "Every Day". Below that, the box labeled "Exclude Filename Filter" was empty, then "Target needs media change" was **not** selected, and "Compress Files" was not selected as well. Since I *didn't* need to make any changes, I clicked on the "Cancel" button rather than the "OK" button. That put me back in the "KBackup" window.

Its left side was completely filled by a giant file/directory tree, with a check box on every line. I clicked on the little "+" sign next to the "media" directory to open it, and then I checked the box next to the "L_DRIVE" subdirectory. On that window's right side, under "Target", a box labeled "Folder" was empty. I clicked on the little button next to it, and a "Select Folder – KBackup" window popped up, containing another directory tree. I selected my 2 **T**B USB Expansion Drive. Then I clicked on the "OK" button, and the contents of that "Folder" box magically changed to "/media/Expansion Drive".

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After that, I clicked on the "Start Backup" button, and (as that name would imply) my backup started.

Under "Totals", three readouts started counting upward, and a big empty box started filling up with the names of each separate file being processed. Here, we hit what *I* certainly consider to be a bug. After that box was completely filled, its contents started to scroll upward as new names were added to the bottom; but when it ran into the first relatively large file (a 417.8 MB ISO file), it stalled, and it didn't move again until the backup was finished. Now. I'd been away from the computer doing other stuff while this backup was running, so it was a while before I noticed that my counters had stopped counting and my drive activity lights had stopped flashing. Eventually, it occurred to me that I could manually drag the slider bar on that box down to the bottom. When I did, I saw two messages. The first (Filtered Files: 0) told me that none of my files had deliberately *not* been backed up. The second (Backup successfully finished) told me that my backup *was*, indeed, completed; and not just "hung up" or "awaiting further instructions". It would have been nice if I could have seen them sooner.

As for my three counters, they read "Files: 12999", "Size: 42625.54 MB" and "Duration: 03:02:40". That 12999 was **much** too high. So KBackup *must* have been counting directories as files; but even then, according to my math, that figure should have been 1299**8**. I was perplexed. (At least that 42625.54 MB, when divided by 1024, gave the proper value of 41.6 GB). Anyway, there was nothing I could do but write down what I saw and then move on. Into utter confusion. My next step **should** have been to do a test restoration, to verify that my backup had, indeed, backed up my files; but I just *couldn't* find a "restore" command. I tried every option I could think of on the "KBackup" window, including the "KBackup Handbook" from their "Help" menu. I tried their website. I opened up a Terminal window and entered "kbackup", but that just brought up the same "KBackup" window that I'd had before. I tried "man kbackup". That brought up backup instructions and a list of backup commands, but **_no_** restore

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commands. I typed in "kbackup --help-all" and got even more backup information; but **_nothing_** about restoration. I even tried "krestore", but all that got me was a "command not found" message.

Now, maybe I hadn't been clever enough to find it, but I began to suspect that maybe there just flat out **_WASN'T_** a restore function. So I gave up in disgust and tried another way. Looking on my Expansion Drive, I found a 41.6 GB file named "backup_2012.02.20-21.11.27_1.tar". As a tar file, I could easily open it with Archive Manager. So I did. (The tar (**t**ape **ar**chive) file format was originally developed in the early days of UNIX, for use with tape backup devices. Over time, it morphed into a way to assemble many files into a single archive file. Think of it as an ancestor of ZIP files). Once that archive had been opened, I could extract any file in it to anyplace I wanted. So I extracted *all* of them to a spare hard disk. Timed by my wristwatch, that took about 42 minutes. Then I went to that disk, and ran L_Total.MD5. According to MD5Summer.exe's built-in indicators, that took 51 minutes and 31 seconds,

and *all* of those extracted files compared identically.

In conclusion: I was really upset by that missing "Restore" function. I mean, if they didn't think it was necessary, why didn't they just clearly and simply **_SAY_** so somewhere? Other than that, KBackup's performance was fairly good. A year ago, Clonezilla had taken 2 hours, 34 minutes and 33 seconds to back up a similarly sized partition, using gzip compression. So KBackup's time of 3 hours, 2 minutes and 40 seconds **was** slower (especially with *no* compression); but not by all that much. I'd say that the capacity to process files individually, the ability to work on something else while KBackup runs quietly in the background, and most definitely *not* having to shut down the computer and then reboot it from the special Clonezilla Live-CD, more than made up for that speed difference. I know how to "work around" the one bug that I found, so I intend to continue "playing" with KBackup. Maybe someday I'll even come to like it.

See you next month. 💻

Make Your Computer Either Stupid, Useless or a Zombie

Vinny LaBash, Regular Columnist, Sarasota PCUG, Florida, labash (at) spcug.org
Newsletter: Sarasota Monitor, www.spcug.org

There are many ways to make your computer useful and reliable: add memory, buy more storage, and be sure to purchase gear and peripherals from reliable vendors. Some people nevertheless, seem determined to find ways to get into trouble. As a TV ad once proclaimed, "We all do dumb things from time to time," but making your computer useless doesn't have to be one of them.

Inadvertently choosing a wrong key combination, clicking OK in an online dialog box designed to deceive you into unknowingly downloading malware or unthinkingly doing something genuinely dumb are all preventable. They are easily avoided if only a small amount of premeditated thought and common sense are applied.

Are you a *"Nervous Newbie*?" People new to computers are often fearful of damaging their equipment. Don't worry! No matter what crazy combination of keystrokes you activate, the computer will not explode. Short of throwing the thing off a rooftop or beating it with a blunt instrument, it's highly unlikely you could do anything to seriously affect your hardware.

Instead, ask yourself, "What would happen if I lost all my data?" The answer will determine what kind of backup plan you should implement. If all you do is surf the internet, fool around playing games, and spend time on a social network site, you don't need much of a backup plan. If you run a business that depends on data that must be constantly updated, losing it all may mean you will retire much earlier than you anticipated at a reduced standard of living. Your personal situation is probably somewhere between these two examples.

Most people are at least vaguely aware that they should back up their system, but never get around to it because it's too much trouble. System crashes and data loss occur for many reasons. Power surges, lightning strikes, hardware failures, software glitches, and user error are among the common

causes of losing information.

Your data is the most important part of your system. You can always reinstall a program, but there is nowhere you can go to buy a copy of your precious data. You must make a copy of your information, and a have recovery plan in place before disaster strikes. You don't have to buy a backup program. Windows 7 has a perfectly good one built-in. You can quickly find it in Control Panel. Use it. You won't be sorry.

Store your backups on a removable disk or flash drive. An increasingly popular alternative is to store data online. Whatever you do, it's important to keep your backups at a location away from your computer to protect against theft of your system or natural disasters. To find the best method for your personal needs there is no better place than your local computer user group. You will find centuries of experience at your disposal.

Losing your data is no fun, but losing your entire system can be much worse. No computer should operate unprotected from electrical surges. The best form of protection is with an Uninterruptible Power Supply (UPS). It is internally powered by a battery that ensures a smooth flow of power even if an outage occurs. This gives you sufficient time for an orderly shutdown to avoid not only loss of information, but physical damage to the computer. Most surge suppressors are worse than useless because they give you a false sense of security.

A surge suppressor can protect a system from a voltage spike usually at a cost of severe internal damage to the surge suppressor. There is seldom any visible sign of harm so it's easy to assume you are still protected when you are not. A high quality UPS provides far more safety.

Most of us like a genuine bargain, and a great temptation is to believe free is always better than merely inexpensive. There are many high quality freeware programs, and many of dubious value. Some freeware programs are so sloppily written they can cause your computer to behave erratically or come to a screeching halt. Even if you take care to research and install only the best of the best, too many installs and uninstalls create useless entries in

the registry. If not properly removed, these registry orphans can create their own problems such as system slowdowns and strange behavior. For good system performance, install only the programs you really need, and keep your installs and uninstalls to a minimum.

Terabyte sized hard drives have made fragmentation less of an issue than with smaller capacity disks, but it can still be a problem if you neglect it too long. Fragmentation will become a non-issue when solid state drives eventually replace standard hard disks. Until that happy day arrives it makes sense to keep your files neatly arranged so the mechanical parts of your drive can take less time accessing programs and information. Files become fragmented through editing documents and other normal usage of computers including surfing the web. Excessive fragmentation forces your hard drive to perform extra work that eventually noticeably slows down your computer.

Windows 7 has an excellent built in defrag tool that you can access through the Systems Tools folder.

The tool runs on a schedule, but you can run it manually anytime. The tool will defrag your system drive, removable storage devices such as USB flash drives, and almost any external storage device where you can store and delete files. Disk Defragmenter runs on an automated schedule, but you can also analyze and defrag your disks and drives manually.

Even if you own a solid state drive that never needs to be defragged, you can still run into trouble by letting it get too full. If you find yourself with a drive that's using more than 90% of its capacity, applications can suddenly exhibit very abnormal behavior. The system has no place to put temporary files, and if a drive runs out of room, it can simply stop leaving you wondering what happened. An easy preventive is to use the Disk Cleanup Tool once or twice a month.

Are you guilty of indiscriminate link clicking? We all know about the danger of downloading attachments that could cause havoc with our systems, but do you click on hyperlinks embedded in emails? This could take you to web sites having

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implanted ActiveX controls designed to either damage your equipment, spy on you to collect passwords or track your activities to target you for personalized advertising among other nefarious reasons.

Some hackers are eager to install back-door or Trojan horses designed to allow them to control your computer without you being aware of it. Your computer could end up being a remotely controlled Zombie soldier in an army of similar machines to launch Distributed Denial of Service attacks.

Carelessly clicking on links could get you to very inappropriate sites that feature pornography, pirated videos, music or other kinds of software which could cause you personal embarrassment and even your job. People have been known to get in trouble with the law when a simple mouse click brought them to a child pornography site.

Think before you click. Bring your mouse pointer over the link. Often this simple act will reveal the real URL the link may be trying to disguise. If you

aren't sure the link isn't going to take you to www.yourpcistoast.com don't do it.

We've covered a fair amount of territory here, but there is more danger lurking on the web than is dreamed of in your philosophy, Horatio. Choosing weak passwords, surfing the web without a firewall, failing to update anti-virus programs, and creating shared folders that the wrong people can access are among many additional dangers there simply isn't room for in this article.

Don't conclude that the web is too dangerous a place for you. The cautions mentioned here is the web equivalent of telling people to stay away from crime-ridden neighborhoods, and don't step off the curb into oncoming traffic without looking to see if it's safe first. As always, common sense is your first and best defense.

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So, Who Needs One?

Wil Wakely, President, Seniors Computer Group, CA, Wilw31 (at) gmail.com
Newsletter: Bits and Bytes, www.scgsd.org

When I ask someone if they have a computer the infrequent answer is the subject of this article. It's hard to convince them of its value because, until you have used one, you don't know what you are missing. And when yours is broken, then you *really* know what you are missing. I made a list of just a few of the programs that are most useful and ended up with four pages, too many to list here. But here are the most popular programs that are considered essential:

Web Browsers – These programs connect you to the Internet, which is an invaluable resource that opens the world to everyone. MS (Microsoft) Internet Explorer (IE) is the most popular browser which is included in all Windows operating systems. Mozilla Firefox is the second most popular, with about a half-dozen other browsers available for free, and each with slightly different features. If for no other reason to own a computer, access to the Internet is at the top of the list and free "Google search" is a gem for the inquisitive. Almost every business today must have a computer and, most likely, a Web site for advertising and support of their products and/or services. Woe to everyone if the Internet ever shuts down for an extended period of time. Many stores close their doors when their computer is 'down'. Most young human cashiers are mathematically crippled without a computerized cash drawer.

Next in usefulness would be **Email** programs, which have revolutionized our planet's communications – these programs are called 'email clients'. There are two basic types of email: 'resident', meaning stored on your computer, and 'web-based', meaning that the program and emails are stored on the Internet. A few examples of 'resident' client programs are Thunderbird, Outlook, Live Mail and Eudora. AOL, MSN, Yahoo and Gmail are examples of web-based email programs. Web-based email is more flexible in that it is accessible from any Internet connection anywhere in the world; however, the emails and

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contacts are not stored on your computer.

Everyone that types needs a **word processor**, which is the most convenient, smartest, easiest to use typewriter in the world. There are three versions of WP (word processors), two of which come with MS Windows. Notepad is the simplest with the fewest features, but for short, quick notes it works fine. Wordpad is a step up in that some formatting features are provided such as change of font size and style. MS Word comes with the MS Office Suite, which must be purchased separately. This is the most powerful of the word processors. However, Open Office Suite (free) has a Word clone included. There are many other word processors available, both free and fee based, that a Google search will uncover. Corel WordPerfect at one time was the leader of the Word Processing world, and is still available. It is not as popular, but it is equally as powerful as Word.

Photo processing is perhaps the third most popular of computer programs. Digital photography, rather than obsolete film, allows your photos to be manipulated with a computer. A host of these programs are available with prices ranging from free to over $500. (Much, much more if you are a photo professional). Some programs allow you to create albums and scrapbooks. You can store selected photos on a web site and allow designated friends to view them at their leisure. So it is not necessary to email your photos; just inform your friends where to view them on the Web, and provide a password if necessary. Picasa, a program from Google is perhaps the best overall photo manipulating program for the price, which is free. If you are a pro, Photoshop is one of the best programs, but it is quite expensive.

Spreadsheets, such as Excel and Paradox are essential if you do any financial or mathematical calculations. If you keep lots of lists by hand, you might find a spreadsheet very useful. Some people use it as an address book and for budgeting. Try it, you might like it, and it is not all that difficult to master.

Utilities to maintain your computer in top running order are necessary programs. Anti-virus, email Spam filters, Firewalls, file managers are all

essential programs. A Google search on the Internet will list thousands in all price ranges. Many are available for free.

Just a few of the other useful computer programs, in no particular order, are: D**raw/Paint, Legal, Genealogy, Tax preparation, Music, Video, FAX, Labels and Envelopes, Calendar, CAD (computer aided design), and databases**. And I know you can think of many more uses for your computer.

Let your Board of Directors know which of the programs you wish to be presented at our Saturday meetings. You might even volunteer to present your favorite one to the membership.

Don't be shy. Happy computing!

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New MagicJack Plus Offers Inexpensive Phone Service
Ira Wilsker

WEBSITES:
http://magicjack.com
http://www.freemagicconference.com

If you watch any TV, you have undoubtedly seen the countless commercials for magicJack, offering to save the users hundreds of dollars a year in phone bills, for a monthly fee of about $2. When it first came out about three years ago, I reviewed the original magicJack in this column and on my weekly radio show. At that time, magicJack offered some of the least expensive unlimited local and long distance phone service in the country by utilizing the small $39.95 USB connected original magicJack device, a broadband internet connected computer, and an attached telephone.

MagicJack is very useful in that it offers unlimited

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local and long distance calling throughout the U.S. and Canada, deeply discounted international calling via prepaid minutes, free directory assistance, call waiting, voice mail, caller ID, and free international calling when calling the U.S. MagicJack also offers its users free conference calling; as long as the user creating the conference call is a registered magicJack user, anyone else may participate in the conference call. Creating a "conference call room" is very simple, and instructions are online at:
www.freemagicconference.com.

According to its website, over eight million of the original magicJack units have been sold. MagicJack uses VoIP (voice over internet protocol) technology to send and receive phone calls over the internet, a technology utilized by several other internet or "digital" phone services. I used the original USB connected magicJack for about two years, primarily for making long distance calls from home rather than using prime time cell phone minutes. I also took my magicJack and an old telephone with me when traveling such that I would have local and long

distance service from hotel rooms, and thus avoid expensive hotel telephone charges, or using limited cell phone minutes. I took my magicJack and phone with me when evacuating from a series of coastal hurricanes, providing me with phone service while away from home. The final use of my original magicJack was in my office so that I could make or return long distance phone calls without incurring long distance charges for my college.

Except for one glitch during a periodic automatic upgrade of the original magicJack software, which led to the loss of my phonebook, it always served me well as long as I had a broadband internet connection and my computer was turned on. The requirement that the original magicJack must be connected via USB to a powered and booted computer was its Achilles' heel. While the voice quality was good, and features comprehensive, the original magicJack could only be used if the computer was on, and I always shut down my computer when I was not using it. With the computer off, the original magicJack was also off,

resulting in missed calls, or the inability to make calls until the computer was on and booted. Because of this inability to function while the computer was off, I started using a competitor's product, NetTalk Duo, which connected directly to my router, and did not require that it be connected to a powered and booted computer, meaning that it was always functional, as long as I had an internet connection.

Recently, a new magicJack Plus ($69.99 retail, 30 day trial available) was introduced which maintained all of the features, portability, and services of the original magicJack, including the first year of service, but now offers the user the choice of being USB connected to a live computer (just like the original product), or being connected directly to a broadband router, which will provide an always-on capability. With this router connected option, there is no need for the magicJack Plus to be connected to a computer, as long as the broadband connection is live and the router is powered.

The new magicJack Plus comes in a package with the simple pictorial connection instructions inside

the cover, and registration instructions on the back cover. The device itself is about the same small size as the original device, 1.7"x2.7"x0.7", black in color, with a small blue LED on the front corner which indicates that the device has power, and a green LED by the Ethernet connection, which indicates that a signal is present. On the right side of the device is a standard male USB connector, with the left side having both Ethernet and phone jacks. In the package with the device is a short USB extension cable, Ethernet cable, and a wall plug transformer with a standard USB connection. Connecting the device is simple and intuitive. To originally setup and register the device requires that the device be connected to a powered USB port on the computer (or a fully powered hub); the included USB extension cable can be used to connect the device if port spacing is a problem.

When connected directly to the computer via USB either for the one-time registration process or for computer based telephone service, the device and its drivers will automatically load unless the security

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software on the computer blocks external devices from automatically running. If the USB connected magicJack will not automatically load when inserted with the computer booted, the user may either uncheck the security software box that restricts external devices from automatically loading, or may manually run the "autorun.exe" on the magicJack drive, which will download, update, and install the magicJack software on the computer, and start the registration process. If it is desired to run in USB mode whenever the computer is on, the magicJack installation process will insert a file in the computer startup sequence that will automatically load the magicJack software at the next boot.

While the actual one-time registration process was simple, it was burdened by a series of about a dozen screens attempting to up sell the user into purchasing additional features and services. One of the first up sell screens offers the user the choice of being assigned a free local phone number by choosing a state, area code and city, or for a $10 fee the user could create a vanity phone number using any

combination of available numbers and letters, or the user can select a Canadian phone number. While not displayed at this time during the registration process, magicJack does offer the ability to transfer an existing phone number to the magicJack service. Another choice was the $3 fee for selecting your own "last four digits" of your assigned phone prefix. One problem became apparent for our local 409 area code; all of the phone numbers listed for 409 were for Galveston; there were no local numbers for the Golden Triangle area of Texas. Another screen offers an optional "this one time only" no-fault comprehensive warranty on the device itself for $1 per year instead of the normal $10 per year. The next screen offers the "5 Year Platinum Service Plan" which adds another 5 years of service, plus a 5 year extended warranty on the device, for a one-time charge of $99.95. A following screen offers a second year of service and a one year warranty extension for $29.95. Still another screen offered the user the option of buying additional devices for $69.95, with free rush shipping. Not yet done selling additional

services, subsequent registration screens offer deeply discounted prepaid international calling, and a $20 lifetime warranty. Once these up sell screens completed their sales pitch, the user enters an activation code emailed by magicJack during the registration process; the user is then shown his magicJack phone number; given the opportunity (twice) to automatically email friends and family the new phone number; and then choose the desired connection method, USB or Ethernet. The registration process is now completed, and the user may now make and receive unlimited calls using the magicJack.

Once registered and activated, the magicJack Plus can be used in USB mode by plugging any standard phone into the phone jack on the device; the power is provided by the USB port (note that this will not work on USB hubs that are not fully powered; many USB hubs do not provide full electrical power to attached devices). The device is now fully functional, and calls may be made using the dial on the phone or by dialing using the magicJack phone

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computer. On an annual basis, having unlimited local and long distance calling, directory assistance, caller ID, voice mail, 911 service, and conference calling for about $2.50 per month is a money saving bargain. I also found that the new magicJack Plus does work fine with my home fax machine. Using the magicJack connected to my router, I have not encountered any functional problems with it; the

book on the desktop.

Alternatively, once registered and activated, the magicJack may be connected directly to the router using the included Ethernet cable, and powered by connecting the device directly to the wall-plug transformer or by using the included USB extension cable to the wall-plug power supply. Utilizing this method, which is my personal preference, is what provides the always-on functionality without the necessity of a powered computer. For those with a simple cable or DSL modem that does not include an extra Ethernet port, the big box office supply and electronics stores, as well as the discount stores, have a "network switch", which is a simple box (about $15) that provides additional Ethernet ports to the cable or DSL modem, and functions as a router.

I found the new magicJack Plus to be feature rich and reasonably priced for the amount of services provided, with very good voice quality. I like the portability and small size of the device, as well as the option to use it with a direct connection to the router, negating the necessity for a powered

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only negative issue is not having a local Golden Triangle phone number. Other then the several marketing screens displayed during the one-time registration process, the magicJack Plus was very fast and easy to install, configure, and setup. For those with broadband internet, the new magicJack Plus may be an effective alternative to high local and long distance phone bills. 💻

Radio Tray, A Minimalist Internet Radio Player
Bill Wayson, Regular Columnist, The Penguins Lair, bwayson (at) gmail.com
Channel Islands PCUG, FL – Newsletter: The Outer Edge, www.cipcug.org

I enjoy listening to music and am in the midst of a project to build a home music system that will allow me to play any music I own anywhere in the house using a hand-held computer as a remote control. Thus I ran across Radio Tray, a great little music player. If you use Linux and would like to listen to a wide variety of music while you work on your computer, then you should give Radio Tray a test drive.

Linux provides you a number of excellent music players to choose from. Most of them suffer from one big downside: They tend to be do-it-all media players. They can handle music, both locally stored as well as Internet audio, and video. Some even support displaying still photographs. While these players have their place, they can slow your PC down and are overkill in some instances. Radio Tray takes the opposite approach. It does only one thing,

and that is to play Internet radio stations. While it is playing, Radio Tray stays out of your way. It inserts an icon in your stem tray and is controlled through its drop-down menu.

Radio Tray is available through the default Ubuntu repositories, but right now only version 0.6.1 is available there. I could not make this version work properly, so I got the latest version, 0.6.4, from the project website at *http://radiotray.sourceforge.net*, which I recommend you do. Download the DEB file, right-click the downloaded file, and install it through the Ubuntu Software Center.

Once it's installed, start Radio Tray by double-clicking the icon. On first start, you'll be asked if you want Radio Tray to run in the system tray or as an application indicator. I can see no difference between either choice as they both result in an icon in the system tray. Click the icon to raise a menu, which includes preconfigured radio stations and a preferences dialog.

The radio stations are grouped bookmark style by genre (Jazz, Latin, etc.). Peruse the menu, click on a station, and shortly the icon turns blue and you should be hearing music on your PC.

Adding new stations is pretty simple. Click on the icon, select Preferences, Configure Radios.... If you want to add your station to a new group, create it first by clicking the Add Group button. Hierarchies of groups under other groups are supported. Add your new station by clicking the Add button. Name it whatever you want, enter the station URL, and select the group the station ought to appear under. Groups and stations can be rearranged by selecting the group or station and pressing the Move Group button.

What is missing that would be really nice is some way of selecting some station you've found, such as through your Web browser, and adding it to Radio Tray either through a menu item or a select-and drag operation.

Finding Internet radio stations is also simple. Internet radio stations are simply Internet-accessible URLs that stream audio in a specific format. You

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point a player to a station URL just as you would point your browser to a Web page. Radio ray supports PLS (Shoutcast/Icecast), M3U, ASX, WAX and WVX playlist formats. Just search the Web using the phrase "internet radio stations," and you'll be presented with many hits to choose from. When you find a station that looks interesting, right click the station URL and copy the link. You can paste the URL into Radio Tray's add a station dialog as described above.

If you would like to manually add groups and stations to Radio Tray's menu, or just see how the bookmarks are implemented, you can open the file <your_home>/.Local/share/radiotray/bookmarks.xml using any text editor. The file follows standard XML formatting with parts of the file being surrounded by opening and closing tags. The outermost tag is bookmarks. Below this is group, and in each group are the stations identified by bookmark tags. Study the file, noting the tags and their contents, and the structure should become clear to you. Before editing

the file, you should first close Radio Tray to avoid conflicts with its use of the file and save a copy of the existing bookmarks.xml file to revert to in case you make a mistake. If your file gets completely corrupted, just delete it. A new file will be created the next time you start Radio Tray.

Radio Tray is a great way to save the location of Internet music, news, and such that you enjoy and to play them while you plug away on your PC. It does this while staying in the background and not presenting you with a lot of extraneous information that you are not interested in at the moment.

Radio Tray shows that in many situations, less is more.

Enjoy discovering Internet radio.

SIG News

LUNICS (Linux/Unix)
Andreas Meyer (lunics@acgnj.org)
http://www.acgnj.org/groups/lunics.html

LUNICS is a group for those who share an interest in Unix and similar operating systems. While we do quite a bit with Linux, we've also been known to discuss Solaris and BSD as well. Recent meetings have followed a Random Access format. See our web page for further information. (We meet on the first Monday of each month, at 8:00 PM). ▭

Main Meeting
Evan Williams (president@acgnj.org)
http://www.acgnj.org/groups/mainmeet.html

We meet on the first Friday of the month, at 8:00 PM. Each December, this meeting includes our Annual Business Meeting and Officer Elections. *No* meetings in July or August. ▭

Layman's Forum
Matt Skoda (som359@aol.com)
http://www.acgnj.org/groups/laymans.html

This SIG discusses issues of interest to novice users or those planning to get started in computing. Watch our Web page for updates and announcements. We meet at the same time as the Hardware Workshop. (On the second Monday of the month, at 8:00 PM). *No* meetings in July and August. ▭

Hardware Workshop
Mike Reagan (hardware@acgnj.org)

This group is dedicated to repairing, refurbishing and/or recycling older computers. Ten people attended the first meeting, so there is still a market for this type of event. Although we looked at some of the older equipment stored in he back room, most of our time was spent in talking about ast experiences and planning for the future. Hopefully, we can establish a viable long-term schedule of projects, and keep the interest of those who attended this inaugural meeting. If you have a hardware problem, bring it in and we can all help fix or demolish it. (No guarantees either way.) We meet at the same time as the Layman's Forum. (On the second Monday of each month, at 8:00 PM). ▭

Java
Mike Redlich (mike@redlich.net)
http://www.redlich.net/javasig/javasig.html

This SIG covers beginner, intermediate, and advanced level Java programming. Primary focus is on developing useful/practical applets and applications. (We meet on the second Tuesday of each month, at 7:30 PM). ▭

Mobile Devices
Brenda Bell (mobdevsig@acgnj.org)

The Mobile Devices SIG focuses largely on current-generation cellphones and smart phones (such as Blackberry, Android, iPhone) which bridge the gap between basic cell phones and traditional computers, and how they can help you manage and organize your life. Our membership ranges from those who have recently acquired their first, basic cellphone to those who develop applications for today's modern smart phones, iPods, and ultra-portable computers. While we expect to spend much of our time investigating the built-in features and specialized applications available to modern smart phones, if you bring your basic (or multimedia) cell phone, iPod, or other mobile device with questions on how to use it, where to find applications, or what features they have, we are always happy to help! Meet and greet and plan where this event goes. Bring all your ideas, PDAs, fancy phones, etc. (We meet on the second Wednesday of alternate months (we get the even ones), at 7:30PM). ▭

WebDev
Evan Williams (webdev@acgnj.org)

This SIG is an open forum for all Website Development techniques and technologies, to encourage study and development of web sites of all kinds. All languages will be considered and examined. The current project is a CMS for the club. Anyone interested in starting a new project, come to the meeting and announce/explain. Provide as much detail as possible. WebDev should be an all-encompassing development and examination forum for all issues, applications, OS, languages and systems one can use to build Websites. We currently

have two web development language SIGs: .NET and Java; but other languages and OS need to be investigated, examined and tested; Windows, Linux, UNIX, DEC, Vax, HP etc. Intel-PC, Motorola - MAC etc. (We meet on the second Wednesday of alternate months (we get the odd ones), at 7:30 PM). 🖥

Investment Software
Jim Cooper (jim@thecoopers.org)
http://www.acgnj.org/groups/sig_investment.html

The Investment SIG continues with presentations on how to use analysis programs TC2000 and TCNet. Large charts are presented on our pull down screen and illustrate the application of computer scans and formulas to find stocks for profitable investments. Technical analysis determines buy points, sell points and projected moves. Technical analysis can also be used on fundamentals such as earnings, sales growth, etc. We're no longer focusing on just Telechart. If you are using (or interested in) Tradestation, eSignal, VectorVest, or just in learning how to select and use charting and technical analysis, come join us!! (We meet on the second Thursday of the month, at 8 PM).🖥

NJ Gamers
Gregg McCarthy (greggmajestic@gmail.com)
http://www.NJGamers.com
www.lanparty.com

The Friday Night Frag starts at 6:00 PM on the second Friday of each month, and keeps going until 12 Noon on Saturday - 18 hours for 5 bucks!
BYOC - Bring your own computer.
BYOF - Bring your own food.
And if you don't like sitting on metal folding chairs... BYO chair! 🖥

Firefox
David McRitchie (firefox@acgnj.org).

This SIG is an open forum for all Firefox and Mozilla techniques and technologies, to encourage study and development of web sites of all kinds. All browsers will be considered and examined. All members and guests are invited to check out the design concepts and voice their opinion. (We meet on the third Monday of each month, at 7:30 PM). 🖥

C/C++ Programming
Bruce Arnold (barnold@ieee.org)
http://acgnj.barnold.us/index.html

This is a forum for discussion of programming in general, beginning and intermediate level C, C++, C-Win programming, hardware, algorithms, and operating systems. We demonstrate real programming in a non-intimidating way, presenting complete code for working programs in 3-5 sheets of paper. (We meet on the third Tuesday of each month, at 7:30 PM). *No* meetings in July or August. 🖥

Window Pains
John Raff (jraff@comcast.net)
http://www.acgnj.org/groups/winpains.html

Intended to provide members with Windows oriented discussions, Microsoft and Linux style. Directed to more technological level of attendee, but newbies are welcomed. (We meet on the third Friday of the month at 8:00 PM). *No* meetings in July or August. 🖥

36th Anniversary Newsletter CD Now On Sale
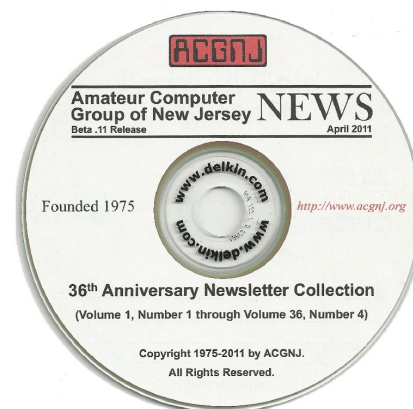
Beta .11 Release.

$8.00, including postage.

($7.00 if you pick up a copy at a meeting).

Get yours today!

Back Issues *Still* Needed

Our collection remains incomplete. Below is a list of missing newsletters. Anyone who lends us one of these (or supplies a good clear copy) will receive the next CD as our thanks.

1975: #2 and #3 (dates uncertain).
1976: January.
1984: August.
1985: June, July, August, September. 🖥

Guru Corner

If you need help with any of the technologies listed below, you can call on the person listed. Please be considerate and call before 10 PM.

Software

HTML	Mike Redlich	908-246-0410
	Jo-Anne Head	908-769-7385
ColdFusion	Jo-Anne Head	908-769-7385
CSS	Frank Warren	908-756-1681
	Jo-Anne Head	908-769-7385
Java	Mike Redlich	908-246-0410
C++	Bruce Arnold	908-735-7898
	Mike Redlich	908-246-0410
ASP	Mike Redlich	908-246-0410
Perl	John Raff	973-560-9070
	Frank Warren	908-756-1681
XML	Mike Redlich	908-246-0410
Genealogy	Frank Warren	908-756-1681
Home Automation	Frank Warren	908-756-1681

Operating Systems

Windows 3.1	Ted Martin	732-636-1942

Discount Computer Magazine Price List
As described by the DealsGuy

	1 yr	2 yr	3 yr
Computer Games	$10.95	20.95	29.95
Computer Gaming World	14.95	28.95	41.95
Computer Shopper1	16.97	32.95	47.95
Dr. Dobbs Journal	15.95	30.95	
Mac Addict	10.97		
Mac Home Journal	15.97	29.97	
Mac World	12.95		
Maximum PC	9.95	18.95	27.95
Microsoft System Journal	21.95	39.95	
PC Gamer	12.95		
PC Magazine (22/44/66 Issues)	25.97	48.95	68.95
PC World	16.95		
Wired	6.00	12.00	17.00

These prices are for new subscriptions and renewals. All orders must be accompanied by a check, cash or Money Order. Make payable to Herb Goodman, and mail to:

Herb Goodman, 8295 Sunlake Drive, Boca Raton, FL 33496

Telephone: 561-488-4465, e-mail: *hgoodman@prodigy.net*

Please allow 10 to 12 weeks for your magazines to start. For renewals you must supply an address label from your present subscription to insure the correct start of your renewal. As an extra service I will mail a renewal notice about 4 months prior to their expiration date. I carry more than 300 titles at excellent prices — email for prices. 🖥

ACGNJ MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Sign up online at *www.acgnj.org/membershipApplication.html* and pay dues with PayPal.

Dues

	US/CANADA	STUDENT	SENIOR CITIZEN (Over 65)
1 Year	$25	$20	$20
2 Years	$40		
3 Years	$55		$45

Mail this application and your check to:

AMATEUR COMPUTER GROUP OF NEW JERSEY, INC., P.O. BOX 135, SCOTCH PLAINS, NJ 07076

☐ New Member ☐ Renewal ☐ Address Change

First Name _____ Last Name _____ Phone _____

Mailing Address _____ E-Mail _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____ URL _____

What topics would you like to see covered at club meetings? _____

Other Local Computer Groups

Princeton Macintosh User Group: 7:15 pm 2nd Tuesday, Jadwin Hall, A-10, Washington Rd, Princeton, (609) 252-1163, *www.pmug-nj.org*	**Linux Users Group in Princeton:** 7 pm, 2nd Wednesday, Lawrence Branch Mercer Library, Rt#1 & Darrah Lane, Lawrence NJ *http://www.lugip.org*	**New York PC:** 3rd Thurs, 7 pm, PS 41, 116 W 11th St. For info call hotline, (212) 533-NYPC, *http://www.nypc.org*
Computer Education Society of Philadelphia: Meetings & Workshops at Jem Electronics, 6622 Castor Ave, Philadelphia PA. *www.cesop.org/*	**Brookdale Computer Users Group**: 7 pm, 3rd Friday, Brookdale Community College, Bldg MAS Rm 100, Lincroft NJ. (732)-739-9633. *www.bcug.com*	**NJ Macintosh User Group**: 8 pm, 3rd Tuesday, Allwood Branch Library, Lyall Rd, Clifton NJ. (201) 893-5274 *http://www.njmug.org*.
PC User Group of So. Jersey: 2nd Mon., 7 pm, Trinity Presb. Church, 499 Rt 70 E, Cherry Hill, NJ. L. Horn, (856) 983-5360	**Hunterdon Computer Club:** 8:30 am, 3rd Sat, Hunterdon Medical Center, Rt 31, Flemington NJ. *www.hunterdoncomputerclub.org*, (908) 995-4042.	**NY Amateur Computer Group:** 2nd Thurs, 7 pm, Rm 806 Silver Bldg, NYU, 32 Waverly Pl, NYC. *http://www.nyacc.org*
Morris Micro Computer Club: 7 pm 2nd Thurs., Morris County Library, Hanover Ave, Morristown NJ, (973) 267-0871. *http://www.morrismicro.com*	**Central Jersey Computer Club**: 8 pm, 4th Friday, Rm 74, Armstrong Hall, College of NJ. Rich Williams, (609) 466-0909.	**NJ PC User Group:** 2nd Thurs, Monroe Rm at Wyckoff Public Library, 7 pm. Maureen Shannon, (201) 853-7432, *www.njpcug.org*
Philadelphia Area Computer Society: 3rd Sat, 12 noon Main Meeting, groups 8 am-3 pm. Upper Moreland Middle School, Hatboro PA. (215) 764-6338. *www.pacsnet.org*	**NJ Computer Club:** 6:15 pm, 2nd Wednesday except Jul & Aug, North Branch Reformed Church, 203 Rt 28, Bridgewater NJ. *http://www.njcc.org*	**Princeton PC Users Group**: 2nd Monday, Lawrenceville Library, Alt Rt 1 & Darrah Lane, Lawrenceville, Paul Kurivchack (908) 218-0778, *http://www.ppcug-nj.org*

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Member of
The Association of
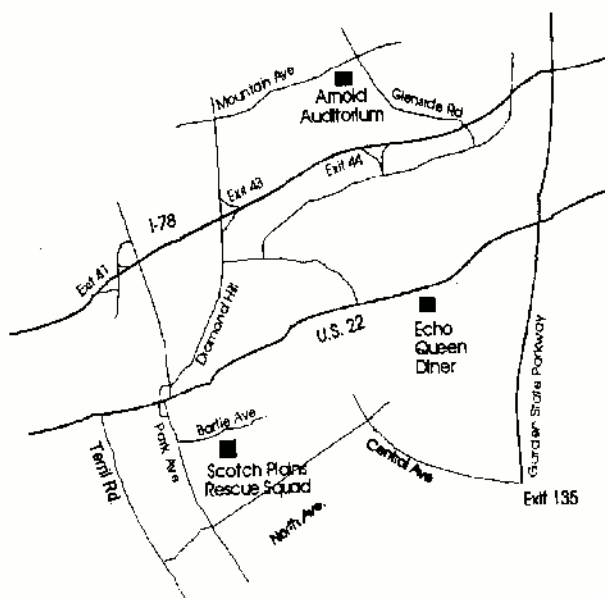Personal Computer User Groups
http://www.apcug.net

Radio and TV Programs

Computer Radio Show, WBAI 99.5 FM, NY, Wed. 8-9 p.m.

Software Review, The Learning Channel, Saturday 10-10:30 p.m.

On Computers, WCTC 1450 AM, New Brunswick, Sunday 1-4 p.m. To ask questions call (800) 677-0874.

PC Talk, Sunday from 8 p.m. to 10 p.m., 1210 AM Philadelphia. 1-800-876-WPEN

Directions to Meetings at Scotch Plains Rescue Squad, 1916 Bartle Ave., Scotch Plains NJ

From New York City or Northern New Jersey
Take Route 1&9 or the Garden State Parkway to US 22 Westbound.

From Southern New Jersey
Take Parkway north to Exit 135 (Clark). Stay on left of ramp, follow circle under Parkway. Bear right to Central Avenue; follow to Westfield and under RR overpass. Left at light to North Avenue; follow to light in Fanwood. Right on Martine (which becomes Park Ave). Right on Bartle Ave in middle of shopping district.Scotch Plains Rescue Squad (2-story brick) is located on the right. Do not park in the row next to the building — you'll be towed.

From I-78 (either direction)
Take exit 41 (Scotch Plains); follow signs to US 22. Turn right at light at bottom of hill and use overpass to cross Rt. 22. Follow US 22 Westbound directions.

From US 22 Westbound
Exit at Park Avenue, Scotch Plains after McDonalds on the right, diagonally opposite Scotchwood Diner on the left, immediately before the overpass. After exiting, turn left at the light and use overpass to cross US 22. Bear right at bottom of ramp to continue south on Park Avenue. Turn left at the second light (a staggered intersection). Scotch Plains Rescue Squad (2-story brick) is on the right. Do not park in the row next to the building — you'll be towed. We meet on the second floor, entering by the door at the right front of the building.

From Western New Jersey
Take US 22 Eastbound to the Park Avenue exit. The exit is about a mile past Terrill Road and immediately past the overpass. Exit onto Park Avenue South and follow the directions above to the Rescue Squad building.